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Editors: ANANDA GURUGE, B.A., Ph.D., C.C.S
W. P. DALUWATTE, C.C.S.

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RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

IT was recently announced by the Director of Education, Mr. S. F. de Silva, that Buddhism was being taught as a compulsory subject to all Buddhist children in Government Schools and that the Poya Days were set apart for religious observances by both the teachers and the children. This is no doubt a very happy state of affairs and it is opportune for the Buddhists to express their gratitude to the educationists of the last two decades who made it possible for our children to receive their education in a wholesome religious atmosphere.

In 1939 when the Education Ordinance was passed by the State Council, there was in it provision for the giving of religious instruction in Government Schools; but there were restrictions. Religious instruction was to be imparted out of school hours purely as an extra-curricular activity. It was left to the good sense of the Head Master to decide whether classes in religion were to be organized in his school. As it was inevitable when the State itself appeared to be half-hearted about religious instruction, such extra classes were rarely or never arranged.

This position was reviewed by the Special Committee on Education of which Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara, then Minister of Education, was Chairman. In the Report of this Committee, published in 1943, it was stated:

> " The world is as much in need of religion today as ever before. We are in the midst of a cataclysm that has engulfed the whole world. We see the extent to which power and greed dominate the world and knowledge and science are being prostituted to bring about the destruction and devastation that is now going on all around us. Some people are asking! 'Have the youth of today who are fighting each other in all parts of the globe been brought up on a wrong sense of values ?' The answer is that social, political and educational aims have been deficient. Accordingly in any new educational system we should attach greater importance to moral than to mere intellectual development. It is no less the duty of the State than that of the parent to ensure that the child receives as far as is practicable a 'complete' education and we are of opinion that a religious background is indispensable to a 'complete' education."

The Committee, which emphasized thus the importance of religious instruction in no uncertain terms, recommended that religious instruction be made a part of the curriculum in Government Schools. This decision was reached in spite of opposition. The Report states:

> " There was a certain section of opinion that was entirely opposed to any religious instruction being given in State Schools. State neutrality in matters pertaining to religion was pleaded in support of the objection..... We do not agree that religious

instruction in Government school is inconsistent with State neutrality in matters of religion so long as the State makes similar and equal provision to communities. In fact, we go further and assert that it is the duty of the State to provide in its schools for the instruction of the pupils. We do not even see anything wrong in the State subsidizing the teaching of religions in schools provided all denominations are equally treated in the matter of such subsidy."

The recommendation of the Special Committee to include religious instruction in the curriculum of a school was a bold step, especially when India almost at the same time took a very dim view of the feasibility of imparting religious knowledge in a State School. The Central Advisory Board of India in its report states : "After fully considering all aspects of the question the Board resolved that while they recognize the fundamental importance of spiritual and moral instruction in the building of character, the provision for such teaching, except in so far as it can be provided in the normal course of secular instruction, should be the responsibility of the home and the community to which the pupil belongs." When India attained independence, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted certain principles in regard to education and among them is the injunction "*No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State Funds.*" Two reasons appear to have compelled the Indian Government to take up this attitude. Firstly, there were many religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism and State educational institutions were considered to be incapable of providing instruction in all those faiths. Secondly, religions were considered a source of strife and disunity. Dr. Ambedkar explained these objections in the constituent Assembly. With regard to the first he said, "to assign such a task to the state would be to ask it to do the impossible." As regards the second object he stated, "We should be considerably disturbing the peaceful atmosphere of an institution if these controversies with regard to the truthful character of any particular religion and the erroneous character of the other were brought into juxtaposition in the school itself."

These two objections should be considered in the light of the conditions prevailing in Ceylon. We, too, have a number of religions and the difficulties within a school in catering for the needs of every group remain the same. It may be that a fair proportion of the minority groups in every Province do not receive the benefit of religious instruction. But the administrative difficulties have not prevented the majority groups — without any discrimination as to their political or social importance — from being benefited.

The dictum that religions are a source of strife and disunity needs careful examination. It was the late Lord Bryce who observed, "Half the wars of Europe, half the internal troubles that have vexed European states, from the Monophysite controversies in the Roman Empire of the fifth century down to the *Kulturkampf* in the German Empire of the nineteenth, have arisen from theological differences or from the rival claims of church and state" Mahatma Gandhi, too, believed that religion was a cause of dissension. In 1938, he stated that the teaching of religion was excluded from the Wardha Scheme because he was "afraid that religions as they are taught and practised today, lead to conflict rather than unity." It is true that there had been numerous instances when in the name of religion the most despicable acts of cruelty had been committed. But on no occasion was the religion, itself, the cause. It becomes merely an excuse or a tool in the hands of an unscruplous seeker after power or position. The fact that religion can most easily be exploited is one of the most cogent reasons as to why proper religious instruction should be imparted through the schools. Religious instruction received either from the parents or from other persons may be faulty in so far as it is imparted in a spirit that is more liable to be sectarian than when it is given in a public school. The school teacher, who is entrusted with the task of moulding the character of the child, is better suited to give a broad and general knowledge of the religion, than a parent who may have acquired too many prejudices to be able to appreciate what is good in another man's point of view.

It may sometimes sound paradoxical when we say that sectarianism can be checked most effectively by only a thorough understanding of one's own religion. Every religion seeks to ennoble the man ; every religion aims at the good — which is fundamentally the and same everywhere in the world ; every religion spurns dishonesty, violence and selfishness. Let religion be taught in schools with the main purpose of inculcating in the children the lofty qualities which are above group loyalties and conventional prejudices. The child's own religion — that is, the religion of the home — is adequate to achieve this purpose. This, we feel, is more effective than what is attempted elsewhere by teaching the children bits of every religion ; this would only be confusing. This approach may be beneficial when dealing with University students. But a school child would decide to be honest rather because it pleases the god whom he worships along with his parents and brothers and sisters than because the Buddha the Christ and Prophet Mohammed have enjoined men to be honest. However, harmful the institution of organized religion may be, the principle of taking a child from the known to the unknown demands that his own religion should be taught first.

These arguments may be utilized to prove the uselessness of moral instruction to children. Mere instruction on a purely abstract level makes very little impression in the child's mind. All the moral and spirtual values, which a citizen should know, should be based on his own religion, and should be introduced in school through the same medium.

We, in Ceylon, have accepted these principles and have provided for not only religious instruction but also religious observances within the school. A large number of State Schools in predominantly Buddhist areas have their own shrine rooms and Buddhist monks have volunteered to devote their time and energy to the teaching of Buddhism in the schools. It nas been possible for the Director of Education to announce that Buddhist children in Government Schools receive instruction in Buddhism. When will it be possible for him to tell us that every Buddhist child in the Island is taught his religion? We hope it will not be very far, for we can hardly wait.

THE SOLE WAY

Ekayano Ayam Maggo

By R. G. De S. WETTIMUNY

THE problem of actuality comes precisely to this: the problem of consciousness. The problem of the concept is also the problem of consciousness, of mind-consciousness. I can become conscious of, or I can conceive things, rightly or wrongly. Yet it is all the same a conceiving. The fact is that I can conceive actuality in any one of these three modes,— fictitiously, hypothetically, or rightly. Which only means that the fictitious concept as well as the hypothetical concept *are also a part of* actuality.

When I take for water the sunshine on the sand, there is brought about in me what is called a wrong notion. A wrong notion or a wrong comprehension of actuality has been upbuilt in my mind, has been actualized. And that which is upbuilt, is actualized, (*snkhata*) is a part of actuality. The actualizations (*sankhara*) that are going on within me, the thoughts that are arising and ceasing in me are arising and ceasing notwithstanding the question as to whether they are right or wrong. Right or wrong, the fact is, they *do* arise. That means they are a part of actuality. Let one realise this before he is to proceed any further.

To me the problem of actuality is the problem of my consciousness in all its manifestations. All that the external world does as far as I am concerned is to provide one supporting point for the arising of the various aspects of my consciousness which, collectively, I call *myself*.

Now, when I comprehend something, I also *know* that I comprehend. This knowledge is also a part of actuality. Thus there is not only an actuality in the objective sense but also a *knowledge of actuality* in the subjective sense. And there exists a problem entirely because this knowledge of actuality which, whilst forming a part of actuality, is not in harmony with that actuality it seeks to comprehend, is in contradiction with it.

It does not therefore suffice me to merely comprehend actuality as that which it really is. Along with such a right comprehension I must also see the nature of wrong comprehension, its arising and passing away, and the sufficient reason for it all. Actuality embraces the attempts to comprehend actuality, and the problem of right comprehension is made ever so difficult by reason of the fact that those attempts at comprehending actuality can suffer the fate of being an actuality which is either fiction or hypothesis, error or provisionality.

I therefore approach the problem of right understanding with the following question:

How must actuality run its course if it is not to take the form of a fictitious or hypothetical conceiving at any point?

This is the same question that is embodied in the words: *What is the way of truth-seeking?* But the answer to this question is by no means an answer that one can without difficulty find. Were it so simple and easily determinable an answer, then there certainly would not be all those edifices of human thought which have fallen into opposition with living experience in so disappointing a fashion. Let alone the answer, a diagnosis of the difficulties that this question presents is itself a tedious task especially in the face of all those theories, hypotheses, and speculations that are so lavishly offered to the thinker nowadays.

One wanders through all the fields of human thought hitherto held in high esteem looking for an answer to this question: How must actuality run its course if it is not to take the form of a fictitious or hypothetical, erroneous or provisional conceiving at any point? All of them have something to say, but yet none wholly satisfying. But if to this question no complete answer can be found, complete in that he who provides the answer must also at the same time offer to guide the seeker to the final

consummation of the search whence he could say to himself that naught else remains to do, then it means that the human race has still to produce its most accomplished product who would have lived actuality to its highest consummation. It would then spell bad for all truth-seekers, for all actual thinkers and no alternative would lie for a poverty-stricken mental life than to fall back and remain in the mire of concepts. " But by good fortune the giant among mental giants with his giant truth in his Teaching, already for the last two thousand years has been living amongst mankind." And this answer comes, a truly enlightening answer, rendering a staggering blow to all theories and hypotheses,—*It must be the Way of Mindfulness* !

" The one and only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of pain and grief, for finding the right path, for the realising of cessation, is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness." (*ekayano ayam bhikkhave maggo sattanam visuddhiya soka-pariddavanam samatikkamaya dukkha domanassanam atthangamaya nayassa adhigamaya nibbanassa saccikiriyaya cattaro sati-patthana*). (Digha Nikaya 22).

With this there takes place the first great and worthy change in the way of all truth seeking. No longer do I, the truth-seeker, become what the Buddha calls a " reconstructor of the past." No longer do I become what on the other hand he calls an " arranger of the future." For here all speculations regarding the past and the future are done away with. Here every truth of life has to be lived out and experienced. And if I have up to now tried to comprehend the truths of life by a process of logical reasoning, by a dabbling in concepts, henceforth I am compelled to understand and comprehend them fully by *mindfully* living them out in myself.

Within this way the Buddha discovered the process of life proceeds not with a conceiving in the fashion of a trying to remember the past or a speculating on the future, but with a conceiving which takes the form of an immediate apprehension of that part of actuality which alone is accessible and truly is to me,—*the present living moment.*

From irrational belief as of religion, from the hypothetical working as of science, I cross over to Buddhism, to *experiencing* actuality. And within this experiencing the Buddha makes me see for myself in clear light the arising and passing away of the concept, whether such be right or wrong, along with the sufficient reason for its arising and passing away. The reason for the discord between my concept of actuality and actuality, the minus quantity or the missing factor of the hypothetical concept,—all these are brought to light. Here within this way the Buddha makes me comprehend the world as it really is before I proceed to make deliberations regarding a past world or a future world.

What exactly this Way of Mindfulness is — this is not the place to discuss. A certain amount of instruction by the Buddha himself is necessary. It is like the instructions given by him who has already travelled the whole length of the journey to a novice who wishes to travel the same weary way. On the Way itself only a few remarks can be made here. It refers things back to the thinker himself and therewith makes a call to him to perform the duties that follow from his understanding. From this fact one can arrive at a simple definition of what Buddhism is, tnat is, it is the right understanding of what life is and therewith the performance of the duties that follow from such an understanding. It is *mindfulness* all the same with all these preliminaries, though at first sight it may appear to be not exactly as laid out in the Way of Mindfulness.

Buddhism is therefore not something to be believed in as the essence of religion is. " Just as a goldsmith tests his gold in the fire," the Buddha said, " so should even my words be tested." They have to be tested in the court of actuality which in the final analysis is the court of living experience. To all truth-seekers the Buddha admonishes : " Do not go upon report ; do not go upon tradition ; do not go upon hearsay ; do not go upon correspondence with scripture; do not go upon cogitation ; do not go upon logic ; do not go upon specious reasoning ; do not go upon approval of a thought—over notion do not go upon a person's seeming ability ; do not go upon the thought, ' The ascetic is our teacher'." (Anguttara Nikaya, I), Nor is Buddhism something that can be proved or disproved as science would have it done. It is something that one has to experience by himself.

Buddhism tells me that the drama of birth, life and death cannot be comprehended by being a mere spectator to the drama. It tells me that if I am to comprehend it I have to become the dramatist myself. Just as I have realised what joy and sorrow are by having experienced them myself, in exactly the same manner have I to realise the highest truths of life by living them out in myself. Inasmuch as joy and sorrow are particular phases of this life-process so are the highest truths of life. They too have to become particular phases of this same process, the conditions necessary for the actualization of which phases I still have to cause to become.

This position has nevertneless been accepted by many a great mind ; only, they could not discover the way to bring about such an actualization. Thus the Buddha towers above them all. This discovery that he made, this way he discovered, after making the greatest sactifice, entitles him to the ephithet — *Buddha.*

Comprehending truth means the living out and experiencing of it in oneself. It is so, simply because that which is called consciousness, cognition, is not something that allows of it to be comprehended from a standpoint outside of it. I can find no standpoint outside of my consciousness, no footing away from it. There lies the greatest stumbling block to conceptual thought and the reason for its general impoverishment when confronted with the problem of life. Living is a process of becoming conscious, and inasmuch as I have come to know joy and sorrow by becoming conscious of them within me, precisely in the same manner have I to come to know the goal, the ceasing of all desire, by becoming conscious of it in myself. Not though, in the way of a mind-consciousness which, in a conceptual fashion says : It *must* be so, or it *should* be so. But in the way of a mind-consciousness which, experiencing, knowing, realising, says : It *is* so. The whole of actuality has to run its course thus if it were not to suffer the fate of a fictitious or hypothetical conceiving at any stage.

" Here a monk, having seen an object with the eye, knows when lust, hatred and delusion are within, thus : ' Lust, hatred and delusion, are in me.' He knows when lust, hatred and delusion are not within, thus : ' Lust, hatred and delusion are not in me.' Monks, must these things be understood according to faith, inclination, report, specious reasoning, or approval of a thought-over notion ?

" No, Venerable Sir."

" Monks, *this even is the way* in which a monk, apart from faith (*annatreva saddhaya*), apart from inclination (*annatra ruciya*), apart from report (*annatra anussava*), apart from specious reasoning (*annatra akaraparivitakka*), and apart from approval of a thought-over notion (*annatra ditthinijjhanakhantiya*), declares realisation of knowledge : ' I know, " Birth has been exhausted, the excellent life has been lived ; what must be done has been done, there is nothing more to come herefrom " '." (Sam. Nik., Salayatanavagga, Nava-pu ranavagga, Sutta No. 8).

This even is the way of truth-seeking. This even is the way to Enlightenment. This even is the Sole way.—the *cattaro sattipatthana.*

* * *

To tread the way, and to be merely shown the way,—these are two different things that have two different effects. He who has trodden the way by himself can never in all fullness make another realise what it is like by merely pointing out the way. And he who accepts the call to be shown the way must necessarily have confidence in the one who offers to show the way. Confidence in the teacher is essential, — confidence to follow the teacher until the results prove to oneself the truth of what the teacher teaches him. With the realisation of every successive step that is taught confidence in the teacher is strengthened. Confidence is one's greatest friend ; and along with confidence goes hand in hand that other attribute called courage,— an attribute which comes in only where there is sufficient conviction. He who respects not confidence will experience nothing worthy.

Having driven away from the mind all those heaped up concepts whether such be logical or illogical, and armed with confidence and courage, one can attempt to tread the path of search that Buddhism has laid down,— a path which commences with Right Understanding (*samma ditthi*) and sufficiently clear insight into the nature of all things. Thus ready to be instructed in order to achieve this, one can stand at the portals of Buddhism. In such fashion only can one stand before the gates of this magnificent city, to enter which one must have the passport that all the wondrous maze of gigantic wisdom one will find inside is not something that has to be believed in, nor yet is something that can be proved or disproved as one would ordinarily have it, but is something that has to be lived out and experienced by oneself till the results prove the truth of it all.

That is the "drama" of the Buddhist doctrine,—the drama that keeps wer both religion and science, the drama of actuality that keeps over both fiction and hypothesis, over both error and provisionality.

VERITY AT ALL LEVELS

By NIHAL De SILVA

VERITY at all levels : to maintain this throughout, indeed is required all the skill of a clever speaker or writer. Before proceeding any further on this subject, however, it would be well to clear any possible misgivings about the perhaps intriguing topic.

By "verity at all levels" is not meant here what is generally known as ambiguity. Rather, is meant the quality of remaining true, whatever the degree of accuracy required. We shall consider an example of the reverse. Take this statement : " The flame of the lamp shone throughout the night." What is wrong with this ? Absolutely nothing, to all intents and purposes ; but then, a scientist will tell us that there can be no question of a flame ever continuing, and even that there is no such thing as a ' flame,' which is but the

name for a group of ever-moving incandescent particles. Similarly, with this statement, too: "They all saw the rainbow"; for a scientist will tell us that no two people can see the same 'rainbow,' which is but the name for the sunlight split up by a particular set of water particles. So it is seen how these examples represent truth at one level (*viz.* that of the man-in-the-street) and untruth at another——the scientist's. Their verity, therefore, is limited.

Now, there are two difficulties that confront one in attempting to maintain verity at all levels. *viz.* the limitations of language, and the understanding capacity of the audience. So that it is not reasonable to expect anyone to preserve 100 per cent. universal verity in one's speech, the Buddha having been no exception.

Nevertheless, a clever speaker would be able to preserve this quality to a large extent. When such as one speaks, therefore, everyone listens intently, and all feel that they have understood the speaker, even though the actual understanding has been at varying levels. In fact, when the Buddha preached, his words were so selected that each person in the audience felt that the discourse was directed at oneself. No one went away dissatisfied, but the different levels of their understanding were evidenced by the fact that some attained Full Sanctity, some attained the stage of Non-Return, some the stage of Once-Return, some Stream-Winning, while yet other left the place only as slightly better Buddhists.

Thus, in the Buddha's teaching, we find numerous instances of the presentation of certain facts and the selection of technical terms, so as to preserve verity at all levels, in a remarkable manner. Within this article, a few such instances will be dealt with briefly.

Mangala Sutta.—The *Mangala Sutta*, as the name implies, deals with Blessings, or Progress. Viewed in its simplest form, it mentions certain factors which, if taken individually, conduce to one's progress and well-being in both this world and the next. For instance, avoidance of evil friends and association with the wise, respect for those who deserve it, residing in a suitable locality, and so on. The mention of these virtues would be of use even to a simpleton who, would cultivate them. Yet, to one who looks deeper, the *Mangala Sutta* means much more than that. It contains a sequential description of the path to Nibbana. It contains the development of the three stages of morality, concentration and wisdom. Starting with the pre-requisite of desirable company, it ends up with the Goal, thus: the higher life, penetration of the Noble Truths, realization of Nibbana. Finally is described the fruit of Arahatship, as: a mind that is unperturbed by worldly conditions, that is sorrowless, stainless and secure. The *Mangala Sutta*, therefore, is an example of verity at all levels. Whether Progress means that in everyday life, or whether taken in the ultimate sense with Nibbana as the goal, the discourse holds equally true.

Dhamma.—The term '*dhamma*,' of course, can have a multiplicity of meanings. We take here the term in the context of the Three Refuges. (*viz.* Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha). We are often taught that the second Refuge is the Doctrine of the Buddha, and this is generally interpreted as the Tipitaka Dhamma. But in the ultimate sense, the term Dhamma refers to Nibbana and its stages of attainment (*nava lokuttara dhamma*); for, strictly speaking, they are Nibbana and its stages of realization that afford us true security from the ills of Existence. Therefore, whether we take the Doctrine as found in the Tipitaka, or whether we take the nine supermundane states, as the Dhamma; it holds good as the 2nd of the Three Refuges. Nevertheless, whereas the Tipitaka can help only one who practises it correctly — like an umbrella that protects one who bears it properly— and can even be detrimental to one who grasps it in the wrong manner; the security offered by Nibbana is ever permanent and unassailable. Similarly, if we take the statement, "Of all delights, delight in the Dhamma is supreme," this too remains true at all levels. Viewed in the simplest manner, the delight gained in listening to the Dhamma or reading or discussing or analytically examining it, is a far more refined, pacifying and elevating delight than that gained in gratifying the senses. At a higher level, the delight gained in experiencing the various mental Absorptions (*jhana*) is one that puts all sensual delights in the shade, and which makes a man fit for the *brahma* world. In the highest sense, the delight in Nibbana, as enjoyed during *Nirodha Samapatti*, for instance, has no parallel in the world, and *Anupadisesa Nibbana* that an Arahat enjoys at death, is unsurpassable in that it is ever immutable and everlasting.

Akaliko.— There is also the word '*akaliko*,' used by the Buddha, in connexion with the Dhamma. The word literally means "time-less," or with no lapse of time (immediate). At the simplest level it can mean that the fruits of the Dhamma, or the goal of Buddhism, can be experienced here, within this very life. In the strict sense, however, it refers to the supermundane states; for the 'Fruition-Consciousness' invariably follows the 'Path-Consciousness' without even a single thought-moment intervening.

Very often the results of certain actions are described in a manner that holds good for various levels of accuracy. Take, for instance, the blessings of Benevolent Love (*metta*). One who practises this Love is said to get sound sleep, a clear complexion, tranquillity of mind, the love of men and deities, and immunity to most dangers.

Is this not true even at a very ordinary level? One who loves others and does not hate and envy them will naturally have sound sleep, and a clear complexion resulting from a pure bloodstream. He will naturally be popular, and thus, the dangers to which he would be exposed would be necessarily limited. For 100 per cent. results, however, one should gain an Absorption through the exercise of this benevolent Love. The complexion of such an one would be almost radiant, and not even a thunderbolt could kill him, unless, of course, a past evil *kamma* takes fruit at the moment.

Four Noble Truths.— Let us consider the Four Noble Truths — the 4 eternal verities. These are the Truths of suffering, its Origin, its Extinction and the Means thereto. Take them at their simplest level. (1) Who is the sane person that would deny that there exists unhappiness in this world? (2) What could be truer than that craving is the root of all suffering? What are quarrels and wars due to, if not to greed? (3) Thirdly, is not happiness identical with contentment, or the appeasement of greed? This is obvious in that a man's happiness is inversely proportional to the strength of his desires. The fewer his wants and ambitions, the greater are his contentment and his peace of mind. (4) And finally, how could this state of contentment be achieved? It is thorough a through conviction and realization of the vanity of all worldly joys. This conviction, in turn, comes through cold contemplation of the situation — for which contemplation one need have a basic foundation of morality. For instance, a murderer, a robber or cheat, an adulterer, a habitual liar or a drunkard is in no position to give dispassionate consideration to matters spiritual. Now for the Four Noble Truths in their absolute sense. (1) Not only does suffering *exist* in the world, but *everything* worldly constitutes suffering, by virtue of its impermanence. (2) Craving is the cause of suffering not merely because it is the cause of quarrels and wars; but because it leads to rebirth in this recurring cycle of Existence. (3) The extinction and total eradication of Craving is identical with the gaining of Nibbana, which is in reality the only solution to the suffering caused by repeated birth. (4) This state of Nibbana is to be gained through direct, intuitive Insight (*vipassana* into the 3 characteristics of the undesirability of all conditioned things. To facilitate this Insight, the gaining of the mental Absorptions is very helpful; and basic morality in word and deed is the indispensable foundation to all this.

Noble Eightfold Path.— The Noble Eightfold Path that leads to Nibbana, generally speaking, consists of 8 aspects that embrace all the activities of a human being. A human being understands matters, thinks, speaks, acts, earns his living, strives, contemplates, and enjoys mental rest. The Noble Eightfold Path teaches us the correct way with regard to each of these aspects —— aspects that we need develop at every available opportunity. In the absolute sense, however, the Noble Eightfold Path is so called because it forms the entrance to each of the 4 stages of sanctity. It refers to the mental qualities of wisdom, detachment, non-hate, compassion, abstention (from evil words and deeds), energy, mindfulness and concentration (*panna, nekkhamma, avyapada, ahimsa, virati, viriya, sati, samadhi*); that simultaneously appear in and characterize each 'Path-Consciousness' (*magga-citta*) immedately preceding the respective 'Fruition-Consciousness' (*phala-citta*).

Three Characteristics.— Lastly, we consider the 3 Characteristics of Esixtence: *aniccata, dukkhata, anattata. Aniccata,* in the least, can mean impermanence, mutability or transience — something that any sensible person would agree on, with regard to the world. That we *must* die some day, anyone knows or feels, even vaguely. (We are all born into this world because of a particular action (*kamma*); and even if no other casual one intervenes, the life so brought about must necessarily end as the effect of the life-generating action (*janaka kamma*) comes to its end). But the fact that we *are* dying every single moment, no worldling ever understands. *Aniccata,* therefore, in the ultimate sense, means Transitoriness — the fact that every physical or mental state is *ever* changing, moment to moment. Similarly, *dukkhata* can mean the quality of being unsatisfactory, sorrow-yielding, and subject to or carrying the germ of suffering. *e.g.* that all life is unsatisfactory since it has to end in death, some day. But is this context, it really means the utter worthlessness or Futility of each momentary physical or mental state, on account of its Transitoriness. *Anattata,* in the least, can mean soullessness; or the absence of any particular unchanging thing called a 'soul' or 'ego' or 'self,' as distinct from the body and mind. In the highest sense, however, it means Phenomenality — the absence of *anything* independent or specific, even as a 'body' or 'mind.' It refers to the illusory and deceptive nature of all physical and mental states —as, for instance, there is no 'fabric' apart from interwoven threads; no 'thread' apart from intertwisted fibres; etc.

THE PALI CHRONICLES

By SUJATA GURUGE

IN spite of the Indian tendency of honouring and accepting an idea or a custom only if it is old (*e.g. Esa dhammo sanantano* etc.), India never made up her mind to write histories. None of the Vedas or Brahmanas or the Aranyakas and upanisads care to record the incidents tnat took place at the time and whatever they have at least heard. It was probably because the men in the field of literature were men not of this world but of the other-world. The masses, as usual, nad attempted to keep the memories of momentous events green and, being no historian distorted the original picture and gave us what we call " mythology." *With the rise of Brahmanism and the growth in power of the Brahmin caste, geneologies came to be kept. In Rg. Veda itself we come across the geneologies of the bards who were responsible for the composition of the Family Books. These geneologies were called " vamsas."*

Later when the Buddhist monks in the monasteries of Ceylon who not only collected religious legends and wrote commentaries on the canonical texts *but also tried to keep a record of what was taking place about them began to write chronicles* or histories, they, too, were known by the same name, vamsa. *The composition of Vamses by Buddhist monks had been commenced at such an early age that one Vamsa is included in the Tipitaka. This Buddhavamsa* being not the last text in the canon according to both Rhys Davids and B.C. Law, we can safely date its composition as circa 300 B.C. and the last Vamsa, to exclude the continuation of Mahavamsa by Venerable Yagirala Pannananda Thero in the 20th century, is the Sasanavamsa of Pannasamin composed in 1861. This aspect of the Pali Literature, dubbed by Geiger the *Chronicle literature,* is represented by well over a dozen works distributed throughout 22 centuries. The rather chronologically arranged list is as follows :.

1. Buddhavamsa
2. Atthakathamahavamsa
3. Dipavamsa
4. Anagatavamsa
5. Mahavamsa
6. Bodhivamsa
7. Dathavamsa
8. Thupavamsa
9. Culavamsa I
10. Attanagaluvamsa
11. Culavamsa II
12. Saddhammasangaha
13. Lalatadhatuvamsa
14. Chakesadhatuvamsa
15. Gandhavamsa
16. Culavamsa III
17. Simavivadavinicchayakatha
18. Sasanavamsa.

The first, as we have already seen, indicates the enthusiasm of the monks to know what had taken place ages ago. *The interest in history must have been originated by the records, of the first two councils included in the Cullavagga,* which is supposed to be earlier than Buddhavamsa. The belief in rebirth and thereby in previous births and the confidence in the Jatakas encouraged the monks to specualte on probable past incidents, definitely in analogy with the present. Buddhavamsa, which deals with the twenty-four past Buddhas, who foretold the appearence of Gotama Buddha, is doubtless a significant result of this tendency. It is the creation of a clever poet and he has increased the effect it has on its readers by putting the whole poem in the mouth of Gotama Buddha who speaks of himself in the first person. *From the modern scholars' point of view this work has no value other than supplying us an index as to the growing interest in chronicles among the Buddhist literati.*

But before long, this interest was put into good use. The commentators of Ceylon began to introduce into their commentaries accounts of their patrons, schisms etc. and by about the 4th century A.D. *there was in Ceylon a chronicle, written in Old Sinhalese, studded with Pali verses, which was a part of an atthakatha and therefore known as Attha katha-maha vamsa.* It is definite that Buddhaghosa supplied a historical introduction to his Samantapasadika by way of imitation.

From this and Cullavagga and probably popular ballads, material was drawn for Dipavamsa which must have been composed between 302 and 450 A.D. *From a literary point of view it is certainly a very poor attempt at writing verses in Pali.* Whole chunks are reproduced from the source — books ; and as Mahanama had very aptly described it,

Poranehi kato p'eso ativittharitokvaci
Ativa kvaci sankhitto aneka-punaruttako

Yet the informations " given in it are not quite imaginary." It is historically important and its historicity is established by its frequent agreement with tradition current in India.

The period immediately following that of Dipavamsa saw the literary activities of Buddhaghosa and other commentators. Pali was made a flexible language by them and above all as a result of the Atthakathas being translated into Pali, the study of Pali was made indispensable. During the reign of Dhatusena, an attempt was made to comment on Dipavamsa. It was the king himself who proclaimed that a thousand pieces of gold would be presented to the person who could comment on Dipavamsa (*Dipavamsam dipetum*), *A monk by the name of Mahanama took up the challenge and Mahavamsa was produced.* Fleet and Geiger endorse this account of Culavamsa and *consider Mahavamsa a commentary on Dipavamsa while Winternitz who, gives a different interpretation to "Dipetum" and also doubts the meaning of " Poranehi kato p'eso ", hesitates to agree.* The

commentary written on Mahavamsa in called "Tika" and thus it presupposes a commentary (Atthakatha). There being no atthakatha extant and there being the remotest chances of having lost the atthakatha, it should necessarily be thought that Mahavamsa was a commentary in itself.

It has to be said that Mahavamsa is certainly the work of a poet, who, while reviewing the same period as Dipavamsa, had combined two great epics, namely Devanampiyatissa Epic and Duttha Gamini Epic. All faults observed in Dipavamsa had been successfully avoided. The general impression created in readers by Mahavamsa had been so favourable that as late as the 13th century a monk by the name of Dhammakitti undertook to continue the chronicle upto the end of the reign of Parakkamabahu I. Later at two instances it was prolonged by two monks so as to cover the period immediately preceding the arrival of the English. *These three appendices to Mahavamsa go under the appelation of Culavamsa.*

Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa and Culavamsa dealt with the general history of pre-Asokan but Post-Buddhistic India and post-Wijayan Ceylon. *As such it comprises the history of various sacred objects, monasteries, literary works and also that of the Buddhist church.* But before long *there grew a tendency to write specialised histories of each of the above*, drawing the material from these chronicles. As shown in the preceding list, chronicles were composed dealing solely with the Bodhi tree, the tooth relic, dagabas, books and the order.

Before coming to these let us just mention an interesting chronicle, *a sequel to Bodhivamsa, called the Anagatavamsa.* It contains the prophesy on the future Buddha Metteyya. It is the work of Kassapa, who according to Gandhavamsa, is the author of Mohavicchedani and Vimaticchedani also.

Taking the above chronicles, the Nidanakatha and Atthakathas as sources, are composed *Bodhivamsa, Dathavamsa and Thupavamsa.* The first is by Upatissa (probably first half of the 11th century) and contains the story of the sacred Bodhi-tree at Anuradhapura while the second work by Dhammakitti (beginning of the 13th century) deals with the story of the Buddha's tooth-relic. The last, Thupavamsa, of Vacissara, a history of stupas, was produced during the first half of the 13th century. During the second half of the thirteenth century was the Pali Campu Kavya, *Attanagaluvamsa*, written. It has as its theme the death of the pious king, Siri Singhabodhi and the erection of a monastery on the spot. The author's name is not known but it is said that he was induced to compose this poem by Anomadassi.

With Saddhamma-sangha of Dhammakitti Mahasamin, which, though not specifically called a Vamsa, is in contents a chronicle, was begun the writing of separate histories of the Buddhist order. Four centuries later, in 1801 a Burmese monk had in his *Simavivada-vinicchaya-katha* included an ecclesiastical history. The *Sasanavamsa*, a history of the order, by Pannasamin is dated as 1861 A.D. In ten chapters it deals with the history of Buddhisim India, Ceylon, Burma and other countries.

Gandhavamsa is unique. *A history of literature though it is expected to be, it is a sort of a library catalogue.* Written in the 17th century, it presupposes the existence of a Maha-gandhavamsa, being termed the Culla-Gandhavamsa. It is very important to the student of Pali Literature.

Last of all are to be mentioned the two histories of the Buddha's frontal bone and the six hair relics. *Nalatadhatuvamsa* and *Chakesadhatuvamsa* were probably composed during the 19th century and the latter was by a Burmese monk.

All these chronicles contain very useful historical data which had to be winnowed out with strict historical criticism.

FORUM

THE Editors are happy to note that the Forum, which came into existence in September this year, is becoming increasingly popular. We have received inquires from readers as to whether any Comments were received from writers. Inquiries of this type, no doubt, indicate that the readers are anxious to see that it is continued as a feature. But we will be happier if the readers actually send in their own views whether it is in the form of a two–line letter or a full article. The Forum is open to all readers and not only to those with a flare for writing.

In the October Issue of the " Buddhist " Mr. Nihal de Silva, put forward the view that the study of Mahayana Buddhist should be done with care and that any attempt to unify the two schools would be undesirable, if not impracticable. We regret that due to reasons already known to our readers, our Printers, namely The Commercial Printing Department of Times of Ceylon, could not publish this issue in time. We hope that our readers will receive their copies of the October Issue as soon as the Printers re-open.

We have received a further Contribution to the Forum. This comes from Venerable K. Dhammapala Thero B. A. (Ceylon) of Government Central College, Narandeniya. The Venerable Thero analyses the similarities and differences in the teachings of the two Schools.

HINAYANA AND MAHAYANA

IT is rather unfortunate that the two great schools of Buddhism *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*, which have divided the Buddhist world today into two camps are most often viewed by many, especially by Northern Buddhists, as diametrically opposed and irreconciliable systems. Mahayana is characterised by Hinayanists as a radical departure from the original orthodox Buddhism, mingled, as it is, with the national cults and superstitions of the countries with which it came into contact during its course of expansion. They refuse to see any unity beneath the apparently contradictory teachings of the two systems and detest the idea that one is a gradual and metaphysical development of the other. Some Mahayana Buddhists, on the other hand, whilst condemning the Hinayana ideal of self-liberation as narrow and selfish claim superiority over the other. To an impartial critic, however, both these contentions may seem false and true at once in so far as both may be truly represented as observations made from the particular perspective of each system in complete ignorance of the truth of the other.

To be precise, the difference between Mayana and Hinayana is one of interpretation.

Mahayana is rightly characterised as the logical and metaphysical development of the original teachings of the Buddha whilst Hinayana or Theravada is the orthodox teaching that provides the very letter of the Buddha. By the assimilation of ideas and beliefs of other religions and by adaptation to the varied conditions of nations and cultures with which it came into contact, Mahayana Buddhism has developed into a world religion suited to the various aptitudes and temperaments of individuals the world over. Hinayana by its refusal to adapt to changing times and conditions of men has become a religion of the few characterised as 'dry' and 'intellectual.' Nevertheless, in fairness to both it must be said that the basic teachings of the two systems have remained more or less the same even though the difference on surface are many and radical. In other words both stress the same ideal through different methods. One insists on compassion while not ignoring wisdom. The other teaches individual attainment of salvation, though not neglecting compassion for others.

Historically, the origin of Mahayana school may be traced back to the time of the Buddha himself. The words of Subhadda clearly indicates that the seeds of dissension were latent even during the lifetime of the Buddha and that they sprouted forth in full vigour only after his death. Subhadda's words are also suggestive of the growing democratic spirit among the Sangha. Of course we would be far too wrong in approving Subhadda's conduct as good but it reveals undeniably the spirit of free enquiry and rational investigation on the part of certain monks, who no longer wished to be tied down by tradition and authority. During the time of the Second Council held by Kalasoka hundred years after

the Parinirvana of the Buddha, the number of such progressive monks had increased and a large number of them is said to have seceded from the orthodox school and established themselves as the Mahasanghikas who later developed into the so-called Mahayana school. Viewed in this context it appears that Mahayana is partly a departure from the original teaching of the Buddha ; but on this reason alone it would be a gross error to affirm that Mahayana is a complete distortion of original Buddhism. That the purpose of progressive monks was not so much the deliberate distortion of the Dhamma as the modification of certain Vinaya rules which to them appeared rigid and inflexible will be clear from a survey of the ten points put forward by them at the Second Council. It was but quite natural on their part to have desired a certain amount of laxity in Vinaya rules, for these like every other thing in nature must undergo change in a fast changing world. What the Master expected of his disciples was not mere blind acceptance of his word but the grasping of the true significance or spirit of the teaching. The mere observing of obsolete rules and customs without grasping their true significance will only retard the growth of spiritual life which truly is based on critical enquiry and understanding.

In this sense the Mahayanists are more broad-minded and liberal, than the Theravadins. And it was this liberal and catholic spirit that led them to develop the Bodhisatta Ideal as opposed to the Arhat Ideal stressed by the Hinayanists. The Mahayanists point out that the purpose of the Buddha was not the mere negative avoidance of suffering. For as Sumedha when confronted with the problem as to whether he would bestow the benefits of his teaching to others by wandering again in samsara or enter into Nirvana in that very life itself, he chose the latter and prefered to go through the purifying fires of suffering through innumerable lives to come to the stage when he could relieve others too from their suffering. " I take upon myself the burden of all suffering, I am determined to undergo it. I turn not back, I do not flee, neither do I tremble, I fear not, I yield not, neither do I hesitate and why ? Because the deliverance of all beings is my vow .....I am working for the incomparable realm of knowledge among all beings. I am not only concerned with my own salvation. All beings must be rescued by me from the ocean of Samsara by the vessel of perfect knowledge."

(Sıksasamuccaya : Santideva)

This Bodhisatta Ideal which combines in itself universal compassion for all beings (Mahakaruna) and Wisdom (Panna) appeals to the heart and mind of man and as a popular religion it has undoubtedly been an extraordinary success. By kindling in men compassion for others above everything else, it has helped to mitigate from the minds of men possessiveness, whilst Hinayana it is pointed out has led to a strengthening of selfishness in individuals by its excessive stress on individual salvation and personal suffering. It is a matter for doubt whether all beings are able to attain Buddhahood and liberate the entire humanity, but what is more important in Mahayana is the development of the lofty mental attitude by the Bodhisatta Ideal, namely the sacrifice of one's self for the welfare of others. Strictly speaking, the Theravadins do not reject *in toto* the idea of Buddhahood as false but the excessive emphasis laid on individual suffering and salvation without regard for others has tended to make it a religion of the few appealing only to intellect.

Whether the Buddhist church of Theravada countries is guided by narrower ideals as is frequently remarked by many is a matter for the reader ro decide but the fact cannot be denied that the constant dwelling on one's own salvation and suffering should result psychologically in egoism and selfishness.

The next question is ! " Does the claim of Hinayana to be the authentic teaching of the Buddha possess any validity ? How far in other words, does the Theravada teaching represent an accurate and true interpretation of the original Buddha word ? Perhaps this question can never be decided if we accept B. L. Suzuki's view that Hinayana too was a gradual growth like the Mahayana. She holds that just as Christianity changed from its primitive form to Pauline and then to Catholic, Protestant etc., so primitive Buddhism was transformed and crystallised by monks and developed into Hinayana and then finally into Mahayana. Mahayana is on the other hand accused by Hinayanists as having corrupted pristine Buddhism by the assimilation of cults and superstitions contrary to the true spirit of the Dhamma. This accusation seems ungrounded if we take stock of the numerous practices that have gradually crept into the Hinayana church today and which continue to play a prominent role in the daily life of our Buddhists,

The Mahayana school contains much perhaps that seem contrary to the true spirit of original Buddha Dhamma. Yet the exponents of Mabayana school affirm that these are only logical and metaphysical interpretations of the Buddha word. Even the famous idea of sunnata (voidity) on which the entire Mahayana doctrine is founded may be traced in its germinal form to the numerous utterances of Buddha scattered in the Sutta Pitaka of the Theravadins.

Reality according to the analytical method of the Theravadins is viewed piecemeal and not as a whole. In meditation, therefore, one has to narrow down the field of vision to such an extent that everything seems to dissolve into nothingness and *ipso facto* appear

meaningless. But the Mahayanists far from stopping short of this analytic view of things balance it by a synthetic insight into the nature of things and thus see meaning in a meaningless existence. They view reality from a universal or distant point of view and thereby discover relationship between phenomena. To them thus the cosmic process is guided by intelligence and Buddhahood is the expression of this intelligent principle.

If the mission of religion is to ennoble man spiritually as well as materially this has admittedly been the most ennobling and successful of world religions in history. *Viewed in the strictest sense if the mission of religion should be confined to the inculcation of a means of individual liberation, a means of escape from cosmic ills in complete negation of whatever that is worldly then Theradava may be considered a religion in the highest sense unparalleled in the history of human thought.* There is no doubt that the ultimate objective of every religion is to transcend the limitations of earthly life, but this end cannot be reached in complete isolation from society or complete withdrawal from human relationships, for the fostering of a spiritual mind could be accomplished only in and through social relationship in some form or other. Hence religion will prove meaningless unless it expresses itself in an external institution or social organisation. Religion cannot exist by itself in scriptuers nor be perpetuated except through the medium of society. Society provides in other words, the only channel through which religion may fulfil its mission. But society on the order hand is never static; it is a changing process and like every other thing in nature has its reality in change. This change is therefore equally true of religion or more precisely its exoteric elements, and all other institutions in the world. It is true of cultures and civilisations, of political ideologies and governments nay, even of human ideas. If anything refuses to adapt itself to external change of nature or society the result will inevitably be death. Mahayana in this sense is truly a living religion in so far as it represents the evolution of human ideas. Buddha himself foresaw that if his monastic order was to survive adaptation to external society was necessary. He believed more in a person's own initiative than obligatory rules and therefore allowed a certain amount of laxity to monks in the observance of vinaya. Most of the vinaya rules such as those pertaining to Uposatha, Vas etc. were directly drawn from contemporary systems and others were so designed as to be in conformity with existing customs and conventions of the then society. Before Parinirvana we are told, he even permitted Ananda to modify minor rules when necessary with the approval of the Sangha. Whilst the Mahayanists availed themselves of this opportunity and developed into a living religion, the Theravadins refused to do so with the sole idea of preserving the Buddha word in its purest form.

K. Dhammapala Thero.

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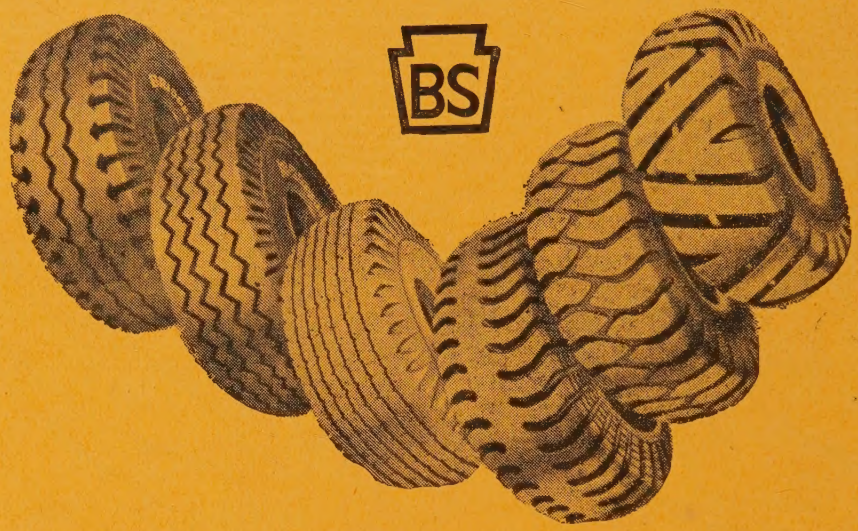

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